

פרשת קדושים

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, Devorah,
and my dear daughter, Ariella.

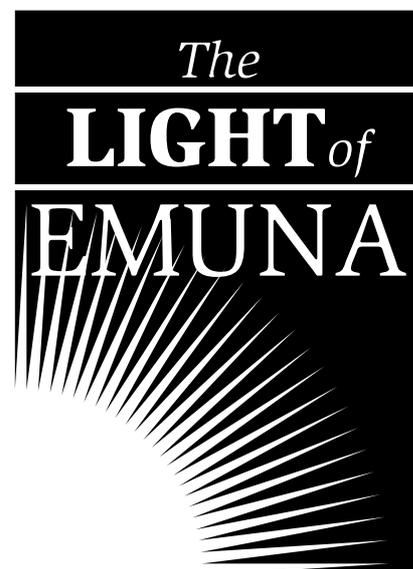
"קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ד' אלקיכם" (יט.ב)
"You shall be holy, for holy am I,
Hashem, your G-d."

To be truly holy, we must love every single Jew.
"For one who toils and endeavors in *Ahavas Yisroel* - is as if he wears his tefillin all day long and the light of the *Shechina* illuminates him."¹

"לא תקם ולא תטר את בני עמך ואהבת לרעך כמוך
אני ד'" (יט.יח)
"You shall not take revenge and you
shall not bear a grudge against the
members of your people; you shall love
your fellow as yourself - I am Hashem."

Upon what does the entire world depend? Upon forgiveness. **One who forgives and pardons his friend - supports the entire world.** To forgive one who hurt us, who made us suffer, who caused us pain - is almost impossible. It is so difficult that Hashem had to command us to not take revenge and to not bear a grudge. What is revenge? Revenge is merely treating someone exactly as they mistreated us. "I will hurt you precisely as you hurt me - no more or less. Just as you withheld a favor from me, where you could have helped me but did not want to - I will withhold a similar favor from you." What is bearing a grudge? A person overcomes his inclination and musters the ability to perform a favor for one who previously withheld a similar favor - but he does not forget, he still resents. We are required to forgive, pardon and eliminate all remnants of negativity from our hearts - and beyond that, to repay another's evil with kindness. Is this reasonable or comprehensible?

¹ שו"ת שארית ישראל



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

The Slonimer Rebbe, the author of the *Birchas Avraham*, was renowned for his magnanimity. Once a childhood acquaintance visited Slonim and publicly derided the Rebbe, impugning his character and questioning his fitness to be a leader of others. The Rebbe remained silent, offering not a word of defense or response. The next day, the man knocked at the Rebbe's door - not to apologize, as onlookers had expected, but to brazenly ask the Rebbe for a sizeable loan - without a hint of apology or remorse. The Rebbe provided the man with the entire sum, without a moment's hesitation. R' Asher Werner zt"l, the Rav of Tiberius, commented that it wasn't the Rebbe's actions that were so impressive, because the Rebbe's nature was so well known - it was the fact that the Rebbe's response was so humble and benevolent that the man did not even realize that his words might have hurt or insulted the Rebbe. That was his true greatness.²

Someone embarrassed us? Someone hurt us? We must turn the world upside down to find a way to forgive.

R' Chaim of Sanz was famous for his dedication to the *mitzvah of tzedaka*. Thousands of indigent people received funds from the *tzaddik* and he was especially meticulous in helping to marry off orphans and arrange for their clothing and dowries. Once, he was sitting with his son, R'

² ברכי נפשי, קדושים

Yechezkel of Shineva, and another local Rav having a Torah discussion. Suddenly, a *melamed* from Sanz walked in and R' Chaim inquired as to when the *melamed's* daughter's upcoming wedding was to take place. The *melamed* responded that he could not yet set a date because he had not yet obtained the necessary sums to purchase the customary *tallis* and *shtreimel* for the *chosson*. R' Yechezkel questioned the man's story because he had personally witnessed the man buy a *tallis* and a *shtreimel* only a few days earlier. Embarrassed, the *melamed* ran away without saying another word. R' Chaim became very upset with his son and said there must have been an explanation - maybe the *melamed* had bought the items on credit and had not yet paid for them or maybe he had used money that he had set aside for his wife's gown and was embarrassed to talk about a gown to the Rabbis and therefore spoke of the *tallis* and *shtreimel*. Either way, he rebuked his son for having embarrassed the man. Immediately, R' Yechezkel ran outside to find the man and beg forgiveness. The man insisted that R' Yechezkel accompany him to R' Chaim for a "*Din Torah*" over the matter. R' Chaim instructed the *melamed*, "Take my advice, do not forgive my son until he accepts upon himself to purchase the *tallis* and *shtreimel* for you and to provide you with all of the necessary funds for the wedding." R' Yechezkel welcomed the penance and immediately agreed. Only then did he earn the forgiveness of the humiliated *melamed*.

Someone hurt or humiliated us? **We must reach beyond ourselves and forgive - for anyone who does not forgive and another person is punished because of him, is unable to enter the sphere of HKB"H.**

The Chidushei Harim of Ger had a *Shamash* named R' Bunim who would coordinate the Rebbe's multitude of visitors. Once, a visitor refused to wait on line or follow protocol and R' Bunim refused to allow him entry to the Rebbe's office. In front of the entire crowd, the man smacked R' Bunim so hard that he was visibly shaken. When R' Bunim entered the Rebbe's office, he said nothing, but the Rebbe saw that he

was shaken. So, R' Bunim told the Rebbe the story but refused to identify the offender. Eventually, the line progressed and it was the wrongdoer's turn to see the Rebbe. R' Bunim presented the man no differently than any other, giving no indication that this was the man who had hit him. However, the Rebbe sensed it and told him that he was not interested in talking to him. Crying, the man explained that he had travelled very far to receive the Rebbe's blessing - he and his wife had not had children for many years and the Rebbe was his last hope. Unmoved, the Rebbe said, I do not want to hear from you until you appease R' Bunim and obtain his forgiveness. The man immediately and sheepishly approached R' Bunim and R' Bunim quickly took the man by the hand back into the Rebbe and told the Rebbe that he was prepared to forgive the man on one condition. What was the condition? That the Rebbe bless the man and his wife with children. The Rebbe was so pleased with the integrity of his *Shamash* that he granted the man's request and his blessing was fulfilled shortly thereafter.

How can we fulfill "love your fellow as yourself" towards someone who has harmed us, hurt us, pained us. Sometimes we hold on to anger, hatred and the desire for revenge for years. We await our enemy's downfall. And if they fall, we are certain that they are being punished on our account. **However, if we can overcome our inclination and cleanse our hearts, if we manage to love rather than hate - we merit great light and our lives are infused with the flavor of Gan Eden.** This is not some exalted level for special people. HKB"H demands this of every Jew. Where do we draw this strength from? From "and you shall follow His ways."³ Just as Hashem is compassionate - so must we be compassionate. Just as Hashem is merciful - so must we be merciful. Just as Hashem performs kindness - so must we perform kindness. **A person who manages to resist what his nature compels him to do and overcomes his negative characteristics - one who does not hate or take revenge against someone who**

³ והלכת בדרכיו (דברים כח, ט)

hurt him – rather, he forgets and removes it from his heart as if it never happened - such a person is strong and brave and Hashem takes pride in him. If HKB"H demands of every single Jew to forgive and pardon, it is a sign that we are capable of it, because HKB"H does not challenge us with things that are beyond our abilities.

What else can help us forgive? Complete *emuna* that if someone hurt us or caused us pain, it was really our own sins that were the cause and HKB"H decreed that this person do what he did. If so, what difference does it make which person actually struck the blow? As Dovid Hamelech acknowledged when Shimi Ben Gera cursed him terribly: "Let him alone, and let him curse; for Hashem has directed him."⁴ **No person can do anything good or bad to us, honor or humiliate us - without Hashem's decree.** No person moves a finger below unless it is so decreed above. Hashem has many messengers - He brings about good via the meritorious and bad via the unworthy. Consequently, whoever inflicts anything positive or negative on us, whether physically, monetarily or to our honor - is merely carrying out Hashem's assignment.⁵

Master of the World, help me to fortify myself with pure thoughts towards everyone, so that I can judge everyone favorably and explain their actions constructively rather than adversely. Thereby, may I secure an unsoiled heart, a pure heart, a heart that is absent any hatred, jealousy, revenge - and in that merit, may I be one of the ones via whom you provide good and not bad.

Love is an obligation - it is our principal obligation. Smile at others. When someone receives a smile - do we have any idea what that does for them? **Use positive words - words that gladden the heart. Unconditional love will bring the Redemption.** The Jewish nation is one. True, there are always difficult people around us, those who we have trouble accepting - but HKB"H is everyone's Father, **He loves us all**

- we do not have the right not to love them. We must invest all of our energies. When R' Dovid of Lelov's son fell critically ill, the entire town screamed and cried out in prayer and Tehillim until the boy recovered. After receiving the good news, R' Dovid returned to the child's bed and continued to cry. His Rebbetzin asked him why he wasn't ecstatic. He explained by asking why when the tailor's son or the shoemaker's son were ill no one shook the world with Tehillim for their recovery.

Moreinu Harav: Our entire mission is to love each other. **Only via love of each other can we receive the light of Torah. It is the first precondition to the acceptance of our prayers.** First and foremost, we must love each other with heart and soul – we must be willing to give up our lives for others, to give up everything that we have - our souls, our physical beings, our money, our time, our strength, our minds - to connect to others. Only then can we deserve holy minds and hearts.

If there is discord – our prayers cannot be accepted. **The Yid Hakadosh used to say that if two Jews sit down to drink tea and each one thinks that the other is superior to him and is in awe of the other – all of their sins are immediately forgiven.**

The Ramban, in his famous letter, warns us that we must be so careful when speaking to others. We must be careful not to hurt, offend or insult. This is most challenging when they have hurt us – but we must nevertheless love them, embrace them – we must attribute their behavior to some momentary lapse – it is not who they are.

To begin loving others we must begin by refraining from doing to them what we do not like having done to us. We must treat others as we enjoy being treated.

We must be pleasant – forego, be patient, not angry, considerate. It is forbidden to hate any Jew, even one who fights with us. **The key to longevity: we are happy when other Jews are happy. If we persevere – we will be relaxed. The best gift we**

⁴ שמואל ב טז, יא

⁵ פלא יועץ נקימה ונטירה

can give anyone is showing them a happy face. The nicest gifts are ruined by a sour face. The *Yid Hakadosh* said that the measure of a true *tzaddik* is his level of *Ahavas Yisroel*.

A man once came to the Satmar Rebbe desperate for a \$30,000 dowry for his daughter. The Rebbe gave him \$29,000 - a very handsome sum in those days. The *Chasidim* asked the Rebbe why, once he was giving so much, he didn't give the man the full \$30,000. The Rebbe explained that if he had given the man his full request he would have been upset with himself later on for not asking for more. Now that the Rebbe's limit was below what he had requested - his joy would not be marred by "what ifs" and he would fully enjoy his *Simcha*.

It is so difficult to forgive and forget, to override our nature, to ignore the sweetness of revenge.

We can only do so by harnessing the power of Torah – it allows us to transcend nature – transforming us into a new creation. The Torah guides us.

There are two ways of life that are polar opposites – like the difference between man and angels. The Creator's Wisdom is the opposite of nature, it recreates us and elevates us to a life of holiness and truth - it creates angels. The other path leads us to lies and deceit.

How fortunate we are and how pleasant is our lot!? We are fortunate to live in the world of Torah and to cling to Hashem's ways. We are fortunate that we have chosen the path of truth and wholesomeness, that our only desire is to abandon the world of inclinations and to enter the world of holiness.

תפילה

Master of the World! Teach me to forgive and pardon. When someone who has hurt me asks for forgiveness and I feel his sincerity and that his apology is heartfelt – I immediately forgive, like most people. But, when the one who hurt me acts as if he did nothing wrong, as if everything is okay and that there is something wrong with me – then it is hard for me, Father. It is difficult for me to approach him and explain why I am upset, why I keep my distance – I wait for him to approach me. Since this usually does not end up happening, I end up simply erasing him from my life. Help me, Father, to judge favorably, to realize that if I was in his position I would probably not behave any differently – to think that he suffered a temporary lapse in judgment – I must have mercy and not get angry. **Help me, Father, to cleanse my heart so that there not remain even a crumb of anger, strictness, hatred, jealousy, revenge or anything else negative – only good, love, and encouragement towards all.**

Master of the World! May I merit *emuna* that those who hurt me, pained me, injured me, insulted me - were Your messengers, Father – caused by my sins. I still do not fully feel this way. I still get angry at people, I get insulted, I eagerly await their downfall, I do not stop to think for a moment that these are the results of my transgressions and that these people are merely Your envoys. **Help me, Father, to have *emuna* that this is the reality and then it will be so much easier to forgive and pardon – because if it is all Your doing, what difference does it make which particular person You chose to be Your messenger, Father?**

Master of the World! May I merit being scared to hurt anyone – like those who chase after those they have hurt and do not rest until they receive wholehearted forgiveness. Even when I do apologize – I am not consumed by receiving a pardon. Also, **help me stop assuming that those who have wronged me will be punished – I am not such a *tzaddik* that my honor deserves such retribution. Help me, Father, to conduct myself with humility and to stop thinking that I am better than others.**

Master of the World! I wish to end this prayer with gratitude. That too is prayer. Thank You for the great level of happiness that I have in my life ever since I started to draw near to You and for the great pleasure that I have from a life of Torah and *mitzvos* – even though I am still so distant from holiness – I want, I want, I want.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov Elias

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

©Dov Elias 5774.

For previous issues and/or to receive this adaptation by weekly email, visit www.tloe.us or email me at LightofEmuna@dovelias.com